

INTELLIGENCE GAP ON CUBA? THE SENATE GETS A REPORT

Can the U. S. really be sure that Soviet missiles are out of Cuba? How about reports of 40,000 Russian troops still there? Just how reliable is U. S. intelligence?

To get the answers, a key Senate group summoned top officials of the CIA and Pentagon, questioned them at length.

From the official report emerges an eye-opening look at last autumn's "intelligence crisis" in Cuba, including a finding that vital information was mishandled.

There's an authoritative look, also, at Red military power now entrenched in Cuba, and a warning of possible danger ahead.

Following are excerpts from a unanimous report on Cuba by the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee. It was made public May 9 by Chairman John Stennis (Dem.), of Mississippi:

SITUATION FROM MID-JULY TO OCT. 22, 1962

Buildup in Soviet Forces and Equipment

In late July and early August, our intelligence noted a significant change in the situation in Cuba. A sudden rise in military aid from the Soviet Union became clearly evident. Ship arrivals, both dry-cargo and passenger, increased drastically. For example, for the first half of 1962, an average of 15 Soviet dry-cargo ships per month arrived in Cuba. The number jumped to 37 in August. Only one Soviet passenger ship had arrived in Cuba during the first five months of 1962. Four arrived in July and six in August.

While our intelligence people were aware from this and other information that a major Soviet effort in Cuba was under way, its exact nature and impact was not clear to the intelligence community.

During the July-August period, refugee reports of alleged missile activity in Cuba increased significantly. These reports were checked out as scrupulously as possible, but even though many of them included consistent and similar descriptions of some form of missile activity, there was no confirmation of them.

At the same time, there were human-source reports that some of the ships were unloaded at night under rigid security with all non-Soviet personnel being excluded from the dock areas. The practice of unloading at night in small, easily guarded ports, remote from large population centers, was known to the intelligence community, although the alleged security conditions ashore could not be confirmed.

Human-source reports also alleged that the nature and character of the arriving Soviet personnel had changed significantly. It was reported that some of the arriving personnel during this period were primarily young, trim, physically fit, suntanned and disciplined, and that they formed in ranks of fours on the docks and moved out in truck convoys. Refugee, exile and other human-source reports suggested that, in contrast to the earlier arrivals, the new arrivals were Soviet combat troops.

However, the intelligence community adhered to the view that they were military instructors, advisers and trainers, plus a number of civilian technicians and advisers associated with improving the Cuban economy. The view was that they did not include significant numbers of Soviet military personnel and that they were not organized into combat units. As late as October 29, in an unclassified information brochure published by the Defense Department entitled "Cuba," the Soviet "personnel" in the island were estimated at 5,000.

Identification of Specific Weapons and Equipment

After mid-September, some reports of missiles being introduced into Cuba were suggestive enough of strategic or offensive weapons to arouse the suspicions of intelligence analysts. This resulted in the conclusion—apparently reached near the end of September, 1962—that there was a suspect medium-range ballistic missile (MRBM) site in Pinar del Rio Province. As a result, photographic coverage of the suspect area was proposed and, on October 11, a Strategic Air Command U-2 reconnaissance aircraft overflew the area and emerged with hard photographic evidence of the San Cristóbal medium-range ballistic-missile complex.

Photographic reconnaissance was unable to detect precisely how many ballistic missiles were introduced into Cuba. Prior to the Soviet announcement that 42 missiles would be withdrawn, our photographs had revealed a lesser number. It could not be established, therefore, how many ballistic missiles were, in fact, introduced into Cuba or specifically how many the Soviets planned to introduce.

Failure to Identify Soviet Organized Ground-Combat Units

As has already been noted, notwithstanding some reports that many of the Soviets arriving in Cuba after mid-July were military units, and notwithstanding the evidence of a drastically increased buildup in modern and sophisticated ground weapons, the intelligence community did not identify the presence of Russian organized ground-combat forces in Cuba until October 25, when new pictures obtained by low-level photography, coupled with a re-analysis of previous photography, led to the conclusion that there were, in fact, four organized, mobile, and powerful armored Soviet units in